

3,725 new child-care spaces coming to Waterloo Region by 2026, province says ^[1]

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Excerpts

The provincial government is promising to opening 3,725 new child-care spaces in Waterloo Region by 2026.

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Education Minister Stephen Lecce made the announcement at RisingOaks Early Learning in Kitchener on Friday.

"[That] represents nearly a 25 per cent increase in child-care spaces in this region, which we will deliver over the next three short years," Lecce said.

It's part of an effort to reduce waitlists for daycare spaces, which the Region of Waterloo said is a problem at every centre in the area.

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The commitment to more spaces in the region comes on the heels of another provincial announcement, committing to increase wages for registered early childhood educators to \$23.86 per hour.

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"If we can fix the ECE challenge that this country has been seized with for some time, we actually can better optimize spaces that already exist," he said.

People working in the industry welcome the wage bump, but Prospero said she'd also like to see a province-wide publicly funded salary scale for all educators.

"Only about 50 to 60 per cent of educators working in licensed child-care are registered early childhood educators, so it leaves the other side saying 'well, what about me? I'm also doing valuable work,'" she said.

Cardow said there are also calls for more benefits for workers, and more funding in order to physically build more spaces. She said the region is putting out a call for locations that would be appropriate for daycare centres.

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Lecce said parents should start seeing some of the new spaces rolling out as early as next year.

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